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MacRae, Hugh [1]

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by Jack Riley, 1991

30 Mar. 1865–20 Oct. 1951

Hugh MacRae, mining engineer, developer, and industrialist, was born in Carbonton,Chatham County [2], of Scottish and English descent. He was the son of Julia Norton and Donald MacRae, who served as British vice-consul in Wilmington [3]. His grandfather, General Alexander MacRae, was a railroad president. His great-great-grandfather, Ruari Doun (Brown Roderick) MacRae, landed in Wilmington from Scotland in 1770. The MacRaes produced three generations of entrepreneurs whose business enterprises stretched from the mountains to the seacoast of North Carolina and beyond.

Hugh was born in Carbonton, the family's "up-country" summer place, because it was considered safer for his expectant mother than the McRae residence in Wilmington during the fierce fighting for strategic Fort Fisher [4] near the end of the Civil War [5]. When the Federal occupation of Wilmington ended, his family returned home. There and atBingham School [6] in Asheville [7] he was prepared for college. He entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at age sixteen and was graduated in 1885.

Returning to his native state, MacRae worked mica, feldspar, and kaolin deposits as a mining engineer at Bailey Mountain, between Spruce Pine and Burnsville, until 1889. Becoming interested in land development, he acquired 16,000 acres and organized the Linville Company, of which he was president and later chairman of the board of directors. His company developed the mountain resort town of Linville in Avery County [8] and purchased Grandfather Mountain [9], which, under the management of his grandson, Hugh MacRae Morton, became a major scenic attraction of western North Carolina. The firm also built Yonahlossee Road between Linville and Blowing Rock in Watauga County [10], using simple tools to carve a highway traversing the highest, most rugged terrain in the eastern United States. In the east, MacRae developed the seacoast resort of Wrightsville Beach.

In 1895 Hugh MacRae became president of the Wilmington Cotton Mills Company. In 1900 he became head of the Wilmington Gas Light Company, which later was merged with the Wilmington Street Railway and the Seacoast Railway to become the Consolidated Railways, Light and Power Company. He continued until 1929 as president of this concern and its successor, the Tide Water Power Company, which became a part of the Carolina Power and Light Company [11] in 1952.

Tide Water drew some of its power from as far away as Blewett Falls, a hydroelectric project of the Great Pee Dee Electric and Power Company, which MacRae persuaded the legislature to charter in 1905. It was authorized to build or develop and operate mills, power companies, transmission lines, railways, turnpikes, telephone and telegraph lines, real estate, and other properties. In 1906 the name was changed to Rockingham Power Company and its authorized capitalization tripled. Blewett Falls and its transmission lines were regarded as pioneers of an infant electric industry.

Along Tide Water's electric trolley route to the beach, MacRae developed the suburban areas of Winter Park, Audubon, and Oleander. The line was extended to Carolina Place, Sunset Park, and Carolina Heights. To develop Wrightsville Beach, he erected a pavilion in 1905–6 and named it Lumina, which was to become legendary for seaside fun and frolic. The picturesque beach trolley made its last run on 26 Apr. 1940, yielding to the horseless carriage.

One of MacRae's beliefs became an agricultural watchword: "The South will come into its own when its fields are green in winter." On his farm, Invershiel, near Rocky Point in Pender County [12], he experimented for thirty years with a grazing program that supported a Black Angus herd year-round. After little luck in inducing midwestern Americans to exploit his more fertile region, he offered free transportation and a chance to buy farmland to Europeans who would settle in his planned communities. In time MacRae colonized six rural communities in Pender [12], New Hanover, [13] and Columbus [14] counties—Italians at St. Helena, Hollanders at Castle Hayne and Van Eden, Greeks at Marathon, Poles at Artesia, and Germans and Hungarians at New Berlin. Due to anti-German sentiment during World War I [15], New Berlin was renamed Delco. Although successful for more than a half century, as were Castle Hayne and St. Helena, the Marathon colony lost its identity as a place name.

His agricultural efforts won MacRae mention as a potential secretary of agriculture during the administration of both Woodrow Wilson [16] and Herbert Hoover [17]. His farm colonization intrigued theNew Deal [18] and led to the federal government's Penderlea [19] resettlement project under Rexford G. Tugwell. His "continuous grazing" pastures for inexpensive winter feeding were ascribed value "beyond estimate" for the South. And his influence brought dairies, nurseries, and bulb-growing, blueberry, and truck farms in southeastern North Carolina, where many family names trace back to his settlers from Europe.

MacRae's broad interests included investment banking, and his personal investment left to his heirs large acreages of

Appalachian coal [20]resources that were to add enormous value in a future plagued by energy shortages. He was a patron of the arts, a member of St. James's Episcopal Church of Wilmington, a Democrat [21], and a member of many professional and fraternal groups.

On 4 Feb. 1891 he married Rena Nelson, the daughter of Benjamin Franklin Nelson, and they had three children: Dorothy, Nelson, and Agnes. He was buried in Oakdale Cemetery [22], Wilmington.

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Hugh MacRae was also a key player, along with Alfred Waddell, in instigating a very dark time and aspect of the state's history. In 1898, he was a leader in the conspiracy to overthrow the legitimate elected Black-white fusionist [23] leadership of Wilmington, North Carolina. MacRae organized the white supremacist mob and campaign that kept Black voters from the polls during the 1898 election and then led a vigilante group, along with Alfred Waddell, that took to the streets in Wilmington to murder Black citizens the next day. The ensuing violence and slaughter that took place in the city has become known as the Wilmington Coup [24]. Members of the white supremacist group, led by Alfred Waddell, later wrote, and implemented a white supremacist manifesto, a set of resolutions called the "White Declaration of Independence." These resolutions demanded that the mayor and police chief resign and required Alex Manly [25], publisher of the city's African American newspaper the *Record*, to close his paper and leave town. The group would go on to replace the city's board of aldermen and consolidate power in the hands of the city's Democrats. From 1898 to 1900 the Democrats continued to solidify political control in the General Assembly and across the state, undoing much of the work that had given Black and poor white people better access to voting and participation in government. And in 1900 the General Assembly passed an amendment to the state constitution that took the right to vote away (called disfranchisement [26]) from African Americans. In the years that followed, segregation was cemented as both legal and social code.

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